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COUSIN GENE

By

GRACE DELANEY GOLDENBURG



SERGEL'S ACTING DRAMA

No. 637

ART. WORKERS LEAGUE

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

COUSIN GENE

A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

By

GRACE DELANEY GOLDENBURG

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CHARACTERS

TED MANNERS.....Inclined to cut up
FRANK STEWART.....Inclined to self conceit
JACK RAWDON.....Inclined to take life easy
GEORGE ADAMS.....Inclined to "do things"
FRED RIPLEY.....Inclined to "do anyone"
BILL TRACEY.....Inclined to slang
DICK HORTON.....Inclined to the classics
FRANK STEWART, SR.....Inclined to millions
EUGENE STEWART—(GENE).....Inclined to pranks
TONY.....Club waiter, inclined to mix the drinks
BENSON.....The butler, inclined to arrogance

ACT I. Lounging room of the "Sons of Millionaires Club,"
New York.

ACT II. Garden before the house at Mr. Stewart's country
place.

ACT III. Same as Act II.

#025

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no. 1.

COUSIN GENE

ACT I

SCENE—*Lounging room of the "Sons of Millionaires" Club, New York. Reading table center with large leather chairs on either side. Smaller tables down right and down left. Piano up left. Other chairs and settees to fill out scene. Books, papers, glasses and decanters are on tables. TONY moves about collecting glasses and taking orders. FRANK, BILL, DICK and TED are at piano singing a college song as curtain rises; JACK, GEORGE and FRED are down right; they join in the chorus and all finish with a class yell.*

TIME—*Evening following graduation day at Yale. They are preparing to separate for their homes, filled with the self-esteem and pride which usually goes before the fall of the average college boy before he has gotten his bearings.*

After song, FRANK, BILL, DICK and TED come down to center table.

FRANK. Boys, we have come to the parting of the ways; after four blissfully happy years together we must part. Oh, how sad the part!

TED. Look out, the part is crooked.

BILL. Cut it out, Frank. Do you want us to do the weeping act? Well, not for mine! Besides, it took Ted six years to get through, so your eulogy on him is wasted.

TED. Now just let up on the six. I stayed six years at Yale, not because my ability was below par, but because, oh, just because—

BILL. Speak it up, Ted, you've got me going; because, oh, just because—

TED. Because I loved not duty less, but the professors more. [*Boys shout, BILL shics a book at him.*]

DICK. You little reprobate, you mean, because the Professors loved you and your pranks. If I'm not mistaken, each year you failed it was because of some prank played on a Profess.

TED. Sure, and they kept me in their class so I could try the same prank over again.

FRANK. Say, do you fellows know that you are spoiling my speech?

BILL. Pardonnez moi! Were you making a speech, kiddo?

FRANK. You fellows make me tired! What did you come up here for, anyway? We planned to come to the Club for a farewell drink to old schooldays, before we cut for home. You asked me to make a speech and when I try to make one—

TED. Try is *good*, Frank; try *is* good.

BILL. We throw the hooks into him, poor little Frankie, his feelings *is* hurt.

FRANK. Aw, quit it.

DICK. Never mind, Frank, I shall endeavor to quiet these facetious children.

BILL. Dick, I wish you would use everyday language. In the middle of the night when I'm trying my best to persuade my peepers to close, one of your "proper" words will come to haunt me. Last night it was "circumstantiate," and, believe me, I sang that word to every tune I ever heard.

TED. Don't talk so much, Bill; Frank is going to make a speech.

FRANK. No, I'm not!

[*JACK, GEORGE, and FRED have gone down left and are talking together, unheeding of the others.*]

BILL. Say, you guys, do you know that you've made Frank peevish?

JACK. [*With lazy drawl.*] Indeed, we're very sorry; what have we done?

GEORGE. I assure you it wasn't intentional, old man. What did we do?

FRED. I didn't do anything. If anyone says I did, he's dead wrong.

BILL. Hurray! Fred's got his Irish up. Frank's been casting pearls before swine here; the swine didn't appreciate the pearls, and so, naturally, Frank's on the peevish list.

DICK. Bill, why can't you use correct English?

BILL. What's the matter with my English?

DICK. It is so undignified.

BILL. Undignified? Well, take it from me, old pal, it expresses my ideas, and that's all that's necessary in this age of speedometers.

JACK. Well, what has become of the speech?

TED. Side-tracked again. Come on, Frank; we'll be quiet now.

FRANK. Under no circumstances would I speak now.

TED. Oh, pickles, precious Percy's peevish!

GEORGE. Now, you boys be quiet. Come on, Frank; you will save us from a lifelong regret. We would never be happy if we knew that you had prepared a speech and had not delivered it. Come on, boys; put him on the table.

FRED. That's the ticket. Up with him, boys. Let him air the wisdom he has paid for.

FRANK. I will not! I fail—

BILL. In the lexicon of Yale, there is no such word as fail!

TED. Except in exams.

[*They put FRANK on the table. He is still inclined to pout.*]

TONY. Oxcoose me, bud I don'd dink dot der dorectors dey would like to haf him sthand on der table yet.

TED. Dot's very kind off der directors, Tony; but ve von't let him fall.

TONY. I vas nod dinking off him falling. I vas dinking off der shoes on der table—dey might hurt der polish.

TED. Boys, take off his shoes. We couldn't risk hurting the polish. It might squeal on us.

FRANK. See here, boys, I won't stand this.

FRED. Let him sit down, boys.

[Boys force FRANK to sit on table. They take off his shoes and stand him up again. All pretend to gasp for breath.]

GEORGE. Oh, Tony!

TONY. Vas iss it, huh?

GEORGE. Open a window, quick.

TONY. Vor vy, huh? Dey vas all open now.

GEORGE. Perhaps we can stand it, but it is rather overpowering.

DICK. Now everybody sit down and listen to this speech.

[All sit meckly; JACK D.R., where he immediately falls asleep; GEORGE and FRED at table D.R.; DICK, TED and BILL D.L. TONY brings glasses and seltzer for the boys.]

FRANK. If I wasn't so darned mad at you fellows you'd never hear this speech; but now you're going to get it, and get it good.

TED. Hear! Hear!

BILL. Shut up! He hasn't said anything yet to say "hear" about.

TED. Do you think he will?

FRANK. "When in the course of human events—"

GEORGE. Give us something new.

DICK. It's new to know that Frank can quote.

BOYS. Shut up!

FRANK. "When in the course of human events—"

TED. He's a repeater!

BOYS. Sh! Sh!

FRANK. A man graduates from the finest school in the land, leaving his schooldays behind him.

TED AND BILL. [Look behind them.] Out of sight.

FRANK. And looks forward with hopeful, far-seeing eyes into the future. [Boys make field glasses of their hands and look.] What does he behold?

TED. JACK RAWDON asleep at the switch. Wake up, JACKIE. [*Throws book at JACK.*]

JACK. [*Wakes with a start.*] Say, who did that? Can't a fellow enjoy a little snooze without some of you fellows cutting up rough?

DICK. I beg of you boys, refrain from argument. You are interrupting the speaker.

FRANK. What does he see?

BILL. It's up to you, Frankie, to tell us. We guessed wrong.

FRANK. He sees a world all topsy turvy.

TED. That guy must have been out all night.

FRANK. He sees causes awaiting the champion; he knows that HE is the champion!

FRED. How many rounds?

FRANK. He goes forth to battle with the world—

JACK. Ah, what's the use? He'll only get hurt.

FRANK. Aye—he gets hurt—but they are the hurts of glory.

DICK. Be careful, Frank, you're mixing your nouns and verbs.

FRANK. They are the scars of victory! What battles do you expect to fight? What victories will *you* win?

FRED. I'd like to see anybody beat me at draw poker.

FRANK. You are on the threshold of life; what do you expect to do?

JACK. If there's a couch on the porch I won't go in.

FRANK. What do you expect to do with your education?

BILL. Take it home and frame it. That's enough now, Frankie. We've enjoyed your speech immensely and know just what's coming, so we will side-track the rest; give us three cheers for old Yale and each other, and take a drink to our future meeting. Of course it's great to have an education. I feel like the frosting on an angel cake—all to the eggs and sugar.

[FRANK gets down disgustedly and puts on his shoes.]

GEORGE. Of course we expect to do things. I'm going to do something wonderful.

BILL. Break it to me gently, George; my heart is weak. What do you expect to do?

GEORGE. Well—er—I don't know yet—but I'll do it.

FRED. Oh, what's the use! Dad is rich and credit's good; let the other fellow worry about doing things.

TED. While Fred is busy doing people. What's your long suit, Dick?

DICK. I have dreams like the young Byron, who woke one morning and found himself famous.

BILL. If that's all you want, Dick, I'll take you out some night and the next morning you will have a famous head.

DICK. Never mind, I'm not as green as I look.

BILL. That would be impossible.

FRANK. Well, let's have Tony decide for us. Hey, Tony—

TONY. Vas iss, huh?

FRANK. Tony, what does your prophetic soul discern in the future for this bunch. Shall we all be famous?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Vamous? I dink nod so. I see too many shentlemens like you vot shust come from college by. You vill sthay vun leedle vile und den you vill all git married.

BOYS. Married!

DICK. Horrors!

TED. Fancy me, boys, being tied for life to a dry goods account. Oh, Mabel, dearest, may I go to the Club? I won't stay long, pet. Oh, do let me go, there's a darling. I promise not to play poker or drink any soda water.—Well, not for me!

BOYS. Nor for me.

FRANK. Come on, boys; let's settle this question right here and now. How many of you are game to join a club which shall be known as the Bachelor Club, in which the members solemnly promise on pain of a forfeit of one thousand dollars, to remain in their present state of bachelorhood.

BOYS. [*All come center.*] I will.

DICK. Good idea, Frank! I'm with you. I could

never write poetry, if I had to be bothered with milliner's bills.

BILL. Bully for you, boys! Education has done us some good; it has made us proof against the wiles of the snare sex. Get some—er—a soda water, Tony, to cement the cornerstone of the new club. We'll come to the private dining room to drink it, where no one will interrupt us.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Oh, yass, sir. [*Exits center.*]

TED. I move that Frank as originator shall be president of the Club.

BOYS. Hurrah! Of couse!

FRANK. All right, boys. Join hands and repeat the terrible oath. Say—"I [*Using your full name*] solemnly promise to spend my days in the free and happy state of bachelorhood—

BOYS. [*Repeat.*]

FRANK. I look upon woman as a snare and a handicap to man—

BOYS. [*Repeat.*]

TED. Make it strong, Frank.

FRANK. I solemnly promise to know many, love few, and marry none.

BOYS. [*Repeat.*]

FRANK. If I break said vow, I promise to pay into the treasury of the Club the sum of \$1000.

BOYS. [*Repeat.*]

TED. I say, that was easy. Why didn't you put some fire and brimstone into it?

GEORGE. He wanted to make it easy for you to crawl out.

TED. You needn't be afraid. There is no danger of me ever wanting to get married. I have four sisters.

DICK. I have three.

BILL. Well, I have six, and they are all to the good—as sisters.

GEORGE. I have two.

FRANK. I have one, but she lives in Europe—thank goodness.

JACK. I have four and they all try to boss me.

FRED. And I have two.

BILL. Isn't it a shame how sisters spoil a fellow for matrimony?

TONY. [*Enters center.*] Vass iss it, huh? Der soda vater vas served in der dining room.

FRANK. Come on, fellows. We will drink to health, wealth, prosperity and long life to the Bachelor Club.

[*All exit center, singing, "We're All Good Fellows," as TONY is about to follow, MR. STEWART, SR., enters right and stops TONY.*]

STEWART. Ah, Tony, has my son turned up here yet?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Meester Frank? Vell, I tink Mr. Frank iss very mooch here, yes. He haf shust make a speech vish nobody leestened at und now he start a club for bachelors at vich dey none off dem get married midout baying somebody von tousand tollars, und now dey vas trinking to it mit—a—soda vater. [*Laughs. Shouts and laughter are heard from boys outside.*]

STEWART. Soda water—humph! Did you mix the—a—soda water?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Yass, I always mixes der soda vater. Nobody else knows shust how dey wants it. [*Laughs aside.*]

STEWART. I dare say not. Well, the young rascal has had his fling, he must get down to work now. I do not expect a great deal of good to come from his four years at Yale; I only hope that there has been no harm done. Tony, here is five dollars. The next time my son orders—a—soda water give him exactly what he asks for. See? He's a man now and must learn that subterfuge never pays.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh, yas? [*Laughs.*] I see. I hope you here ven he orders it. I tink you get your money's vorth.

STEWART. I don't doubt it.

[*Boys rush on, laughing. FRANK sees his father, who is D.R. He runs down to him. Other boys come down to table center.*]

FRANK. Bless my stars! If there isn't the Governor! Glad to see you, Dad! [*Shakes hands with him.*] Boys, you all know Dad.

BOYS. Sure! Good evening, Mr. Stewart.

STEWART. Good evening, boys; my heartiest congratulations on your graduation. I hope that you all graduated with honors.

TED. That's what we did, Mr. Stewart. The faculty gave three cheers and one sigh when we left.

STEWART. What was the sigh for?

BILL. Relief.

STEWART. [*Sits D.R. FRANK stands near him; boys sit at and on table, center.*] I understand that you boys have organized a Bachelor Club.

FRANK. That's what we have, Dad. A wise move, don't you think? How can a man accomplish anything in the world when he is hampered by a woman?

STEWART. It's a fortunate thing for you young rascals that your fathers did not hold the same opinions. Don't you think so?

DICK. Oh, yes. But our fathers were called upon to marry, just as some men are called to fight on the battle field and some are called to preach to the heathen. Now we hold that the men who are called upon to fight the financial battles of the world should be unhampered by domestic ties.

STEWART. Well, well, you presumptuous young cubs, go ahead and win. I've made a million in my time. If you can beat it I'll get a divorce and go on your board of directors.

FRANK. Now don't laugh at us, Dad; we're in earnest. I know that Tony will uphold us, won't you, Tony? You believe bachelors' clubs are the right thing, don't you, Tony?

TONY. Vas iss, huh? Yass, no, I doan know for vy I vass married five dimes yet.

BOYS. You, Tony!

BILL. Slip it to us gently, Tony, slip it to us gently.

It's an awful blow. But tell me, Tony, are they *all* living?

TONY. Vass iss it, huh? Lifing? No. Tree off dem vas deat und der uder two dey married me for der money vot I ain'd got und ven dey find dot I ain'd got it, dey shust get so mad und say dot I vin dem mit false—false—you know vat dey calls dem things ven peoples iss vot dey ain'd und den get mad ven dey ain'd?

DICK. We know, Tony; false pretenses.

TONY. Yass, dot's heem. Dey do teach you some-dins by college, don'd dey? Vell dey called me—dot name vot you said—den dey went by a place vot was called Weno.

TED. Oh, yes—we know.

FRANK. You have had a severe lesson, Tony, but I am sure that nothing could ever tempt you to marry again.

TONY. Vass iss, huh? Vell, not undil September, ven I will marry my third vife's sinder—if I haf der money.

BILL. Oh, Tony, Tony! You have knocked our pins from under us. Henceforth I've no more faith in waiters.

MESSENGER. [*Enters with telegram. Right.*] Telegram for Mr. Frank Stewart, Jr. Telegram for Mr. Frank Stewart, Jr.

FRANK. Here you are. [*Takes telegram, signs book, messenger exits.*]

FRED. Now who do you suppose is sending Frank a telegram?

JACK. Really I am too tired to guess.

TED. A telegram the day after commencement usually marks the commencement of—what?

BILL. And he just organized a Bachelors' Club! Great is the fall, oh great—

FRANK. [*Opens telegram and reads.*] Oh, Dad, good news!

STEWART. What is it, my boy?

FRANK. It's from Gene. "If convenient will make you a long visit at Maplewood.—Gene."

BOYS. Ah-ha! Who is Gene?

FRANK. Why, my cousin, you blockheads. Who do you think?

TED. Well, when the news of a Gene's coming brings such rapture into the face and voice of a young man, one naturally supposes said Gene to be a winsome miss very pleasing to said young man.

STEWART. Why, Gene is—

FRANK. [*Aside.*] Sh! Dad, they think that Gene is a girl—let them. [*Aloud.*] She is rather winsome, I must confess.

GEORGE. Oh, Frank—and you the president of the Bachelor Club.

FRANK. But she is my first cousin, so that lets me out. But say, boys, I have a jolly idea! I want you *all* to come with Dad and me to Maplewood and help entertain Gene. You know that mother and sister are both in Europe, and I lack invention when it comes to entertaining girls. What do you say? You invite them, Dad.

STEWART. The boys know that they are always welcome at Maplewood, and I am sure that Gene's visit will be much pleasanter for their presence. [*Turns away highly amused.*]

BILL. First of all I want to know, kiddo, are we supposed to make love to the divine Gene?

FRANK. Well, where's the harm? The oath said, "know many, love few and marry none." Let Gene be one of the few.

JACK. Not for me. It's too warm to make love in the summer.

TED. No, Frank, I think it would be safer for us to refuse; we're sworn bachelors and there is no use looking for trouble.

DICK. That's right, Ted. That's just the way I feel about it.

FRANK. Then I promise that you need not make love

to her, take moonlight walks or spoon, but for heaven's sake help a pal. There is safety in numbers, you know, but don't—oh don't—leave me for the whole summer at the tender mercy of a female.

FRED. But she is your cousin.

FRANK. Even so, can you not see the danger? She is a member of the "snare" sex; she would snare me and then how could I resist other members of the same sex?

GEORGE. Frank is right, boys. He is our president and it is our duty to protect him.

TED. Let's buckle on the armor, boys; duty calls. She couldn't snare us all at once, you know, and we can see that she gets no chance at any one alone.

FRANK. Hurrah, boys, you're all right. Say, Tony, when does your vacation begin?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? My vacation it begins next week.

FRANK. Do you want to earn some extra money?

TONY. Vas iss, huh? Extra mooney? Vell, I don'd care if I do.

FRANK. [*Writes on card.*] Here are the directions. I will send your ticket and the first day of your vacation you find your way to that sylvan spot. No one can mix— a— soda water as you can. Now hustle and bring us some. We want to drink Cousin Gene's health. [*TONY looks at STEWART, who nods and grins. TONY smiles and exits, center.*]

TED. Don't forget, boys, we are to stand by one another in this deal. Don't any of you chaps go off fishing and leave me to entertain the fair Gene. It's all or none. United we stand and divided— we marry. [*Enter TONY with steins. He passes them to the boys and STEWART, who hold his aside, laughing.*]

FRANK. Dad, we're a temperance crowd. We drink only soda water which Tony prepares for us. Boys, "Here's to Gene; may her spirit be as effervescent as the foam; her nature as pure as the juice; and her

personality as efficacious as the lithia, all of which go to make this—soda water.”

BOYS. To Gene!

[STEWART and TONY are D.R., FRANK center, boys L.C. TONY and Mr. STEWART are watching the boys and trying to suppress their laughter. Boys take a long drink, then begin to spit and splutter and stamp.]

BOYS. Why—why—ugh, ugh! What’s the matter?

FRANK. Matter? matter? Why, it is soda water!

[STEWART throws himself into chair at left of table and laughs immoderately. Boys look bewildered at TONY.]

ACT II.

SCENE—Garden at Maplewood, Mr. STEWART’s country home. Entrance to house R. with porch and practical second story window. Rustic bench D.L. Rustic table with chairs D.R. Flower pot and Bench U.C.

TIME—One week later—afternoon.

PRESENT—FRANK, his father, and EUGENE STEWART [GENE]. GENE has evidently just arrived, as his suit cases are L.C. He is standing center, Mr. STEWART is seated D.R., and FRANK is L.C., near GENE. They have told GENE of the joke they are playing on the boys, who have not yet arrived, and that he must dress and act like a girl for their edification. GENE does not take to the idea very well, and is apparently angry.

FRANK. But you must do it, Gene! I’ll be in an awful mess if you don’t.

GENE. Well, I won’t. What do you take me for, anyway? If you think that I am going to masquerade like an actress and play waiting maid for six wooden-

headed fools who haven't any more sense than to vow not to marry you're mistaken.

FRANK. Thanks!

GENE. It is a dumb fool notion. The fellow who makes a silly vow like that with all the stunning girls running around loose is a chump. That's all I've got to say for him. I never heard of such rot.

STEWART. When these young cubs have had your experience, Gene, they'll forget these radical ideas.

FRANK. Humph! I'm two years older than Gene.

STEWART. Years, yes; but there are some things that count far more than years.

FRANK. We are getting off the subject. The boys will be here on the five forty-five. You'll just have time to dress. Come on, Gene, you're not going to throw me down, are you? Why, I'd be laughed at for the rest of my life.

GENE. I don't know that that would be any worse than for me to spend the summer in a bally blond wig, and petticoats and tight shoes and tight—er— other things.

FRANK. But think of the fun.

GENE. For you; but think of the misery for me.

STEWART. See here, Gene, I encouraged Frank to play this joke, never dreaming but that you would be willing to fall in with it. I remembered your old-time fancy for pranks. I never thought of the discomfort of the thing for you, I will admit, but I will make it worth your while. You studied dramatic art, didn't you?

GENE. Yes, I once cherished dreams of becoming a star, but one season convinced me that I had gotten in wrong.

STEWART. Very well, we will call this a professional engagement. I will engage you to play the part of Jean Stewart; we will change the spelling when we write it, you see—Frank's winsome girl cousin—for the sum of five hundred dollars.

FRANK. Now can you beat that?

GENE. I can. I will play the part for nothing. [*Turns to Frank.*] I beg your pardon, old man, for being so peevish. Of course I'll do it. The only real reason why I hesitated was the fact that Gladys Norris, the girl to whom I am engaged, expects to visit about ten miles from here next month, and she might take it badly if she discovered that I was masquerading. You see, I promised her to cut out all of my old pranks.

STEWART. I am sure that you need have no fear. It will not take the boys a month to fall in love with you.

FRANK. And the minute that one of them proposes you can doff the rags.

GENE. All right, I'll do it. I'll draw Cupid's net so closely around those dumb heads that they will get down on their knees and squeal.

STEWART. You had better brush up on your English. It might be fatal for a sweet, demure young thing to call an admirer a dumb-head, however much she might desire to do so.

GENE. Don't worry about me, Uncle. I haven't followed in the train of the fair sex since I was ten for nothing. I know all of their little secrets. In about fifteen minutes you will be overwhelmed by your charming niece. Do not be surprised at anything I do.

STEWART. I have had dealings enough with the young fellows of today to be immune against surprise.

FRANK. Come on, Gene, the boys will get here before you dress. We will have to ransack Sister's wardrobe for suitable apparel. I bought your wig in New York, and believe me it's a peach. You'll be a perfect doll. Dad, don't forget to close Benson's eyes. Tony will come on the same train with the boys, so he is all right. I sent the car for the boys and the gig for Tony.

STEWART. Trust me. Farewell, dear nephew. When next I greet you it will be, "Welcome, sweet niece."

GENE. [*Simpering.*] Adieu mon oncle, I go for coming conquests to prepare.

[*Exit FRANK and GENE into house, taking suit cases. STEWART crosses D.L., sits on bench and lights cigar.*]

STEWART. [*Laughs.*] Well, well; boys will be boys! I can remember the time when just such a prank as this would have put me in the seventh heaven of joy. I hope Gene gets them going and going good. The conceited young prigs! Ah, well, a few years of buffeting with the world will take the surplus conceit out of them. [BENSON enters from house.] Oh, Benson, come here.

BENSON. [*Crosses and stands respectfully center.*] Yes, sir.

STEWART. Mh—a—Benson, did you see any one come here today?

BENSON. Only the young gentleman, sir; your nephew, I understand, sir.

STEWART. Did any of the other servants see him?

BENSON. No, sir. The other house servants, if you will remember, sir, were given the day off to attend the County Fair. They are just about due to return, sir, and Mr. Frank sent Dawson and Gibbs to the station, sir.

STEWART. Ah, yes—just so. Mh-mh. Well, Benson, you were mistaken; you did not see a young gentleman arrive.

BENSON. [*Looks surprised for a second, is about to answer, and then thinks better of it.*] Yes, sir.

STEWART. However, my *nicce*, a very charming young lady as you shall soon see, arrived a short time ago, and will be with us indefinitely. Remember, a young lady, not a young gentleman; Miss Gene Stewart. It will pay you to remember this carefully, Benson.

BENSON. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

STEWART. That will do, Benson. Dinner at eight as usual.

BENSON. Yes, sir. Thank you, sir. [*Exits into house.*]

STEWART. Strange. When a man becomes a butler he somehow leaves his soul behind him; black becomes white and white black if some one else tells him so, and he increases in value as he is able to subjugate his will

to the will of another. [*Auto horn is heard off L.*] Ah, the to-be-conquered heroes come.

[*STEWART goes left. FRANK comes from house and joins him. BOYS can be heard laughing and talking in the distance. FRANK runs off to meet them. STEWART waits smiling. The car is heard to stop and BOYS increase tumult as they all enter pell-mell, each with a suit case.*]

FRANK. Glad to see you, old sports! How's everybody?

BOYS. Fine and dandy! Hello, Dad!

STEWART. [*Shaking hands with boys.*] You are all heartily welcome, boys, and I sincerely hope that your visit may be a very pleasant one.

BOYS. Don't worry, Dad; we always enjoy ourselves.

BILL. Well, Frankie, where's the doll? Trot her out and end the suspense.

DICK. Bill, show a little decency, can't you?

TED. Don't ask the impossible, Dick; but honestly, Frank, we've gotten our necks twisted like cork screws trying to catch a glimpse of her as we came up the road.

GEORGE. For sworn bachelors you fellows become mighty nervous over entertaining a girl.

TED. But you see this girl is different. We can entertain her without being expected to fall in love with her.

JACK. And love is so tiresome in the summer. What an ideal place for a nap, Frank.

FRANK. If there was any place suitable for a nap, Jackie, you'd find it, wouldn't you, old man?

FRED. But where's the girl?

BOYS. Hasn't she come yet?

FRANK. Oh, she's here all right, but just at present she is taking her beauty sleep. You know all girls must have beauty sleep.

BOYS. Oh,—oh!

DICK. And we made such a racket! Why didn't you tell us, Frank?

BILL. Why didn't you knock us on the block? I'll

bet we woke her up and then she'll be awful peevish; I know my sisters always are.

TED. Yes, but she isn't your sister. Sisters are always nice to other fellows—until they catch them.

TONY. [*Enters L. with old-fashioned telescope.*] Vas iss it, huh? How do Meester Stewart. How do shentlemen.

BOYS. Tony!

BILL. Just the man I'm looking for—with an ax. Oh, you soda water!

BOYS. Oh you Tony! [*Boys rush at TONY. TONY gets behind MR. STEWART.*]

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Vy's the matter?

FRED. We ordered soda water!

TONY. Vell, vy you fuss? I gif you soda vater. I gif you shust vat you ask for.

BOYS. You sure did! UGH! UGH!

FRANK. You knew what we wanted; why didn't you mix it right?

STEWART. Because I told him to give you just exactly what you ordered.

BOYS. You did? Oh, Dad! Why?

STEWART. Because calling things by other than their right names is not manly. You are not temperate because you call yourselves so and call something soda water which is not soda water. If you must drink, drink like men.

FRANK. All right, Dad; we forgive you. But oh, that soda water!

BOYS. [*Making wry faces.*] Ugh! Ugh!

[*Enter BENSON from house.*]

FRANK. Well, Dad, we promise not to do it "no more," but I think, for Gene's sake, we had better call it soda water while she is here. After she leaves we promise to reform. Oh, Benson—

BENSON. Yes, sir.

FRANK. This is Tony, who will look after the boys. He is a famous mixer of soda water. See that he has

plenty of ingredients handy. Give him anything he asks for.

BENSON. Yes, sir; certainly, sir. [*To TONY.*] Come with me.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Mine golly, bud dot man has got vun fine figger! Vat you do mit heem, Meester Frank?

FRANK. With Benson? Oh, Benson is our door-plate of aristocracy. He's quite harmless, Tony, but must be dignified so that the neighbors will hold us in proper respect. You know that nowadays your neighbors judge you not by your own, but by your butler's worth.

TONY. Iss dot so? Vell, he iss some dignified.

[BENSON stares stonily before him, then turns and goes off R. behind house, followed by TONY.]

FRANK. Come on, boys; I will show you to your rooms. I dare say that you would like to shake off some of the dust of travel before you meet the fair Gene.

BILL. Right you are. I feel like I had eaten dust for a month.

JACK. [*Who has been lolling on bench L.*] Oh, dear! I hate to move.

FRED. [*Drags JACK from bench.*] Come on, laziness. Prepare to meet the lady fair.

[BOYS pick up suit cases and start toward house as GENE appears at second story window. GENE is now dressed in a stunning dinner gown, a blond wig very up-to-date, with fancy hair ornaments. The sun is setting, and a ray of light falls directly upon GENE, enhancing the beauty of the picture. GENE appears totally unconscious of the boys, and is looking dreamily off into space. TED sees him first.]

TED. Oh, look! What angel fair gazes from yon window?

[*All look up. They have formed in line—FRANK, TED, BILL, DICK, GEORGE, FRED, JACK. STEWART stands D.L.*]

BOYS. Ah! Ah!

[*All take off hats, stand a moment breathless; then, FRANK leading the way, they slowly enter the house,*

looking up as long as possible. STEWART has held in as long as possible; he shouts with laughter and falls on bench L., still laughing, as GENE enters. GENE is now an ideal girl, up-to-date in every particular, but his slippers hurt dreadfully, and at every opportunity he slips them off.]

GENE. Good evening, Uncle. Why this unseemly mirth?

STEWART. *[Still laughing.]* Why—why—why this is the richest joke I ever participated in. I never saw six young scamps so completely bowled over in my life. Staunch members of "The Bachelor Club," vowed to celibacy, yet when they see a pretty girl standing pensively in the rays of the setting sun, they all proceed to fall in love as quickly as any healthy young modern.

GENE. I did look stunning, didn't I? Posed a la Maude Adams, with chin well up. That usually catches them. But say, Uncle, how's the get-up? *[Whirls around.]*

STEWART. Great! How does it feel?

GENE. Oh, it's not so bad, except the feet and the waist line. They pinch like the deuce! *[Sits on bench beside STEWART and kicks off slippers.]* Umph! That's better.

STEWART. Be careful! They might come out.

GENE. Can't help it. My feet must breathe once in a while.

[FRANK enters from house. He is dying to laugh, and when he sees GENE, he rushes over, sits beside him and howls, which sets GENE and STEWART going again.]

FRANK. Oh, it's great, kid! Keep it going. They are all ready to resign from the Bachelor's Club. Make no mistake, this is the joke of the age.

[They laugh immoderately. GENE still has slippers off. TED, DICK and BILL come on porch; others do not see them.]

BILL. There she is! Say, fellows, she's some girl!

FRANK. *[Looks up and sees boys; he rises quickly and crosses to them.]* Hello, fellows! Ready so soon?

GENE. [*To STEWART.*] Get in front of me, Uncle, quick, while I step into the torture chambers.

STEWART. [*Rises and meets FRANK and boys center. Boys are anxious to get over to GENE, but STEWART manages to hide GENE from view, and talks to boys. Boys try to look over his shoulder, but he prevents them.*] Well, boys, did you get rid of the dust of travel?

DICK. Yes, thank you, we feel quite fit now. [*He steps aside, STEWART steps in front of him.*]

BILL. Yes indeed, we feel fine and dandy. [*Same business.*]

TED. And ready and willing to begin our duties as entertainers. [*Same business.*]

GENE. [*Low to STEWART.*] All right, fire away.

[*STEWART steps aside, FRANK brings boys over, GENE rises graciously.*]

FRANK. Gene, I want you to meet some of my college chums, who have kindly consented to help me show you a good time.

GENE. Oh, how too sweet of them! [*Boys nudge each other and are embarrassed.*]

FRANK. This is Mr. Dick Horton, a shining light in the classics and one day bound to be a great poet.

DICK. [*Very embarrassed.*] Aw, quit, Frank!

GENE. [*Holds out hand.*] How perfectly dear! I know that I shall just love Mr. Horton because I simply dote on poetry. [*DICK is in seventh heaven and forgets to let go of GENE's hand.*]

DICK. Would you like it if I wrote some poetry for you?

GENE. Oh, would you? I would simply adore it. Something about my golden tresses and naughty blue eyes.

DICK. [*Still holding GENE's hand.*] Ah, they could not be naughty. [*Other boys become impatient; FRANK pulls DICK away.*]

FRANK. Here, Dickie, the other boys want a look-in. Pass on! Gene, this is Mr. Bill Tracy, the college authority on slang. He knows every slang phrase ever

invented and in fact has invented some of the most popular.

BILL. Oh, I say, Frank, cut it out!

GENE. [*Holds out hand and cooes.*] How too utterly sweet! I just adore slang; it is so original, and expresses one's ideas so quaintly. You must speak some for me, Mr. Tracy.

BILL. [*Completely overcome.*] You can bet your sweet life I will.

GENE. Is that slang, or a compliment, Mr. Tracy?

FRANK. Both. Come on, Bill, Ted's getting nervous. [*He thrusts BILL aside.*] And this is our distinguished college cut-up, Mr. Ted Manners, guaranteed to chase the blues.

TED. Say, Frank, don't queer a fellow!

GENE. Mr. Manners! [*Holds out hand.*] This is an exquisite pleasure. I could worship a man who is funny.

TED. Say, could you honest? Well, just give me a chance and I'll tell you some prime jokes. [*He is still holding GENE's hand. The offending slippers are beginning to hurt. GENE stands first on one foot, then on the other. Finally sits on bench. TED sits down with GENE still holding his hand. Other boys show signs of jealousy.*]

GENE. Could you really? Do you know, I believe that we are going to be great friends? I am beginning to like you. [*Squirms feet around.*]

TED. Are you, honest? Well, I'm beginning to love—

GENE. Oh—Oh—you mustn't say that—yet.

TED. [*Leans over rapturously.*] Yet? Does that mean that I may—sometime? [*GENE pretends to become embarrassed and does not answer.*]

BILL. [*Has crossed to FRANK.*] Say, Frank, this ain't on the level. Ted's just monopolizing her.

TED. And don't you like it? I thought that you would be tickled to death to get out of entertaining her.

DICK. Well—er—we don't mind entertaining her;

we only drew the line at making love. [STEWART *laughs, aside.*]

FRANK. All right, I'll blaze the trail. Come on. [*He crosses to GENE, boys following.*] I hope that you won't be dull here, Gene.

TED. [*Aside.*] The dickens!

GENE. [*Pulls hand from TED and pretends to be overcome with embarrassment.*] Oh, cousin Frank, how you startled me! I was so engrossed in Mr. Manners' clever anecdotes that I had become completely oblivious to my surroundings. What was it you asked me?

FRANK. I merely said that I hoped you would not be dull here.

GENE. Dull? Oh, I am sure that that would be impossible with these charming boys.

DICK. [*Sits beside GENE.*] It shall be our one ambition, Miss Gene, to see that you have a delightful and long-to-be-remembered vacation.

GENE. How sweet! Do you always speak poetically, Mr. Horton?

BILL. Oh, Dick's all to the good on jingles. [DICK *glares at him.* BILL *leans over the back of the bench.*]

GENE. [*Pretending bewilderment.*] Jingles? What are jingles?

BILL. Rhymes—poetry.

GENE. [*Laughs.*] Oh, I see, slang, you funny boy. Oh, Mr. Manners, would you object to going into the library and bringing me that book which I left on the table by the window? [*Squirms feet.*]

TED. I shall be delighted.. [*Runs into house.*]

GENE. Oh, dear, I am famished for a drink of water.

BILL. I'm Johnny on the spot.

DICK. Allow me. [*Both run off.*]

GENE. [*Kicks off shoes.*] Gosh! I can't stand those blooming shoes and I simply must have a cigarette. [*Takes FRANK'S cigarette case from FRANK'S pocket and lights cigarette. FRANK sits beside him on bench, between GENE and the house.*]

FRANK. Gene, Gene, you'll spoil it!

GENE. Say, if you think it's funny to cram an eight and a half foot into a four shoe and pull a thirty-two inch waist line to twenty-two and a half, try it; but believe me, it is worse than seeing the home team get whipped. [GEORGE, FRED and JACK enter from house and stand on porch. FRANK is between GENE and boys; they can not tell that GENE is smoking. STEWART coughs. GENE looks up, sees boys and hastily thrusts cigarette into FRANK's mouth.]

GENE. Beat it! Some more dumb heads. Go hold them close while I don the pumps.

FRANK. [*Rises hastily and crosses to boys.*] Hello, fellows! Took you some time to make your toilets, but it pays. My, but you look stunning!

[GENE reaches down to put on slippers, catches GEORGE looking, straightens up and appears innocent. GEORGE looks away. He tries again, but finds FRED looking, and straightens up.]

GEORGE. It wouldn't have taken us so long, but Jack went to sleep on the suit cases and we couldn't get our clothes.

JACK. Nothing of the sort. I was on the bed.

FRED. Yes, when you woke up. We threw you there in desperation.

FRANK. [*Aside.*] Got the shoe on yet?

GENE. No! [*Waves frantically to STEWART, who finally comes over.*] Say, Uncle, bend over and pretend to pick up something while I get this bally pump on. Those fellows insist on looking.

STEWART. With the greatest of pleasure. [*He bends over and GENE slips his feet into the pumps and rises.*]

GENE. All right, thanks. [STEWART, unable to control his laughter, exits R.]

FRANK. Gene, here are the rest of the boys. They are very anxious to meet you.

GENE. Charmed, I'm sure.

FRANK. Allow me to present Mr. George Adams, Mr. Fred Ripley and Mr. Jack Rawdon.

BOYS. [*Bowing repeatedly.*] Charmed; charmed; delighted; glad to meet you.

TED. [*Running on from house.*] I'm awfully sorry, Miss Gene, but there was no book on the table. I searched every place; but here's one I wish you would read for my sake.

GENE. [*Sweetly.*] I would read Ibsen for your sake, Mr. Manners. [*Reads title.*] "Love at First Sight." How entrancing! Do you believe in love at first sight, Mr. Manners?

TED. Yesterday I would have said "No" most emphatically, but today—ah—today is different.

GENE. [*Coquettishly.*] Why is today so different?

TED. Come over here and I will tell you. [*He leads GENE up stage to bench center. They sit.*]

GEORGE. Now see what you have done, Jack, with your everlasting napping! Ted's got the inside track, and there's no show for us at all.

FRED. It makes me tired. Why didn't you call us, Frank?

FRANK. Don't worry, boys; your time will come; but let me tell you what she told Dick, that she was crazy for some one to write a poem about her eyes and hair.

BOYS. She did?

FRANK. Sure thing. You boys are good at poetry. Write some and make a hit with her.

BOYS. We will!

JACK. Poetry is so tiresome.

FRANK. You might write her a slumber song.

JACK. That's right; I never thought of that. Come on, boys, let's get busy.

[*The three go L., sit on bench, take out paper and pencil and begin to rack their brains for ideas. Tony enters with a tray upon which is a stein. Bill and Dick accompany him.*]

BILL. Did you think that we would never get back? We couldn't make this dunderhead Dutchman—

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? I ain't no Dutchman; I'm a German.

BILL. I beg your pardon, Tony. [*To GENE.*] We couldn't make this dunderhead German understand what we wanted. We tried to surprise you and have him make a nice glass of lemonade, but he never heard the word before. Mr. Stewart came, however, and he soon made him fix you up a nice ladylike drink. He said that you needn't be afraid of it.

GENE. A ladylike drink in a stein? Is that proper? I am only a simple little girl, you know, and I wouldn't want to do anything unconventional.

DICK. I told Mr. Stewart that I was sure that you would object, but he said that you wouldn't after you had tasted it.

GENE. [*Aside.*] This is the limit, me drinking ladylike drinks, but I guess it all goes in. [*Tastes the drink gingerly, but is immediately delighted.*] Bless his heart; I certainly won't object. That is my favorite brand—I mean beverage. If you don't mind the trouble, I wish you would bring me another, Tony, just like it. I am very thirsty, and I am sure that I could drink another small glass.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Schmall yes? Schmaller dan dis one, huh?

GENE. [*In a fierce aside.*] If you make it any smaller I'll break your head. I want as much as you can cram in.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Yass, Miss, I vill do it. [*Aside.*] Dot's a funny lady for dese boys to be sociating mit. She wants anuder vun as pig as dot vun, und dot vun vas a Martini cocktail in disgust. Mein Gott in Himmel! Dere girls kin go some dese days. Mr. Stewart, he says in a visper, "Make it a Martini und fill der stein, but don't let der boys know." Dere is somedings vunny here.

TED. Tony, didn't you hear Miss Gene ask you to get her some more of that beverage? Get a move on you.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Yes, I will go. [*Exits.*]

STEWART *enters*. GENE *runs to him and throws her arms around his neck.*]

DICK. Heigho! I wish I was Dad.

GENE. You dear, darling Uncle. I must kiss you for that delightful drink. [*Low.*] You're all right, Uncle. Just get me away for a few minutes, so I can take off the wig and shoes and cool off, and I will love you forever.

TED. Her devotion to her Uncle is touching. I love a girl like that.

DICK. Oh, you do, do you? Say, don't let yourself get in too deeply; there are others. [*TED glares at him.*]

STEWART. [*For benefit of boys.*] Gene, dear, would you care to walk with me down to the cliff to see the sunset? There is a beautiful view from there.

GENE. Oh, how too sweet! I just dote on sunsets. To lie on your back, your feet resting on a rock higher than your head—a cigarette—

FRANK. Easy, easy. Girls don't put their feet higher than their heads and smoke cigarettes.

GENE. [*Pretending to be hurt.*] You mistake my meaning, Cousin. I was referring to Uncle. But there aren't any cows, are there, Uncle? I am dreadfully afraid of cows. [*Gives a little scream.*]

BILL. I love a girl that's afraid of cows.

DICK. What right have you to speak of love?

BILL. If you're so anxious to know—none of your business. [*They glare at each other.*]

GENE. Farewell, dear boys, for a time. I am going to say goodnight to the sun. [*Low to STEWART.*] Hurry, these darn shoes will kill me.

[*STEWART and GENE exit L. FRANK, laughing, exits into house. TED, BILL and DICK stand center glaring at each other. GEORGE, FRED and JACK are still writing diligently. TED sees them, and his sunnier disposition comes to the rescue.*]

TED. Say, fellows, look! [*BILL and DICK turn; others are unconscious.*] What's up, boys? What on earth are you doing?

BOYS. Frank said that she adored poetry.

TED, BILL and DICK. That's what she said! [*Each takes out paper and pencil. TED, BILL and DICK go D.R. and sit, TED and BILL on the bench, DICK on chair nearer center. All begin to nibble their pencils and think.*]

JACK. [*Reading.*]

When day is done and night is here,
I begin to feel so queer,
So queer because I want you, dear—

BOYS. [*Turning on him.*] Shut up!

TED. Say, Dickie, give me a sweet word to rhyme with cool.

DICK. [*Busily writing.*] Fool.

TED. Yes, but I'd hate to call her a fool.

DICK. Perhaps; but she can call you one.

TED. Aw, shut up!

BILL. [*Reads his poetry.*]

On the level, kid, you got me going,
Love me, or there'll be something doing.

GEORGE. There'll be something doing if you don't shut up. How can I think when you insist on talking. We were getting along very nicely when you fellows butted in. Who asked you to write poetry?

BILL. Say, listen to what's conversing. You don't happen to hold a lease on the premises, do you, Georgie?

TONY. [*Enters with tray.*] Vas iss it, huh? Vere is dere young lady vat wanted der cock—der drink? She is gone, yass?

TED. [*Looks up.*] Hello, Tony. She went down to the cliff to say "Good night to the sun." Give me that; I'll take it to her.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? All right, bud don'd open der lid; it vill spoil if der air blows on it.

TED. Don't worry; I will guard it carefully for the sake of the sweet lips that will sip it. [*Exits L. TONY exits R. Boys look up disgustedly.*]

BILL. Say, can you beat that? That insolent cad is always butting in. If she had wanted him she would have invited him.

GEORGE. Some fellows have lots of nerve.

FRED. And luck. But don't interrupt me; I have a beautiful train of thought. [*Reads.*]

New England's sun is slowly setting
Behind the rugged cliff—

I like that—"Rugged cliff—"

BILL. I would like it better if you would fall off of that rugged cliff.

DICK. [*Reads.*]

Gene, what magic music sounding
In the beauty of thy name;
It sets my pulses bounding,
It sets my heart aflame.
Thy hair, dear one's a prison
In which my soul is fast;
Thy eyes fulfill life's mission
When on me they're cast.

JACK. Aw, what's the use? Dick always wins the prize for poetry.

BILL. Humph! I don't think so much of that. She said that she adored slang. Mine's in slang.

GEORGE. Did she? I believe I'll try slang.

FRED. So will I. I'm good at slang.

[*They all write earnestly. The sun has set and twilight is deepening. The stage is gradually getting dark. GENE suddenly runs in L., wig in one hand, shoes in the other, looking back evidently trying to avoid some one who is following. GENE does not see the "Poets" until he is center.*]

GENE. Great Scott!

[*GENE runs to house, collides with TONY, who is entering. He throws him across stage and runs into house. TONY sprawls center and rises slowly, looking bewildered.*]

The noise of the fall rouses the boys, who look up annoyed. TED runs in L. It is now almost dark. TONY is left of center; his big white apron deceives TED, who thinks it is GENE. He throws his arms around TONY and kisses him as STEWART enters L. and FRANK R. Boys rise but keep positions.]

TED. You little witch! Did you think you could outrun me? I claim my kiss.

TONY. Gott in Himmel, was iss it, huh?

[FRANK and STEWART are nearly convulsed with laughter.]

TED. Tony! Ugh! How dare you get in my way when I was trying to catch Miss Gene? Have you seen her, boys?

BOYS. No, she didn't come here.

TED. That's strange. I went down to the cliff, but could only find Mr. Stewart. Mr. Stewart said that she had seen me coming and had said that if I caught her I could claim a kiss. I caught a glimpse of her and gave chase. She must have come this way. I saw her.

BILL. So it seems! Look here, Ted, you're not square. You don't give the rest of us a chance to make love—to entertain her.

TED. That's your fault; you're slow.

BOYS. Oh, are we?

JACK. Look!

[GENE again is seen in upper window. Stage is dim, but room behind GENE is brilliantly lighted. GENE stands left of window so that light behind falls directly on face. GENE is evidently unaware of the boys below, but is gazing off into space as when first seen. As JACK speaks BILL and DICK move C. to see better, TED C., JACK, GEORGE and FRED L. C. FRANK and STEWART come D. L.; they laugh quietly but immoderately. TONY is U. L.]

BOYS. Gene!

[Each falls on knee, holding up poem he has written.]

Bill	Ted	Jack	Tony
Dick	George	Fred	Frank
			Stewart

CURTAIN.

ACT III.

SCENE—*Same as Act II.*

TIME—*Evening of the next day. It is moonlight. The house is brilliantly lighted. The bench D. L. is in shadow. GENE, in a stunning evening gown, is seated on bench with his feet propped on a small rustic table, calmly smoking a cigarette. A piano is being played in the house and the boys are singing popular songs, very loudly at first, with the evident intention to impress some one. After curtain they sing softly so as not to obscure GENE's lines.*

GENE. Sing on, ye fools, sing on! I hope to merry Moses that I can finish this cigarette before any of those dumb heads come nosing around. I haven't had one minute's peace in the last twenty-four hours. The stupid things even had the nerve to sit under my window all night like a pack of blood-hounds with the pip, and howl love songs such as—*[One of the boys sing loudly, "Love Me and the World Is Mine."]* Yes, that's it. I got that song last night in sixteen different keys and on so many scales I felt like a fish. I'd like to choke the guy that had the nerve to write it. When they got so hoarse that they couldn't sing they recited impassioned love scenes. I was Juliet; I was Rosalind; I was Cleopatra; I was every woman that ever had a guy dippy about her. If the girls whom I have pursued with my affections have been as desperate and as close to committing murder as I have been since those fools arrived, I'm only sorry that they didn't go ahead and do it. I have received six perfectly original love poems, raving in such extravagant terms about my matchless beauty that I am ready to admit it without proof. I have been called turtle dove—angel face—sweetheart—birdie—pigeon and every animal and bird known and unknown. What a bally fool a man is when he is in

love! [*The last strain of, "Meet Me Tonight in Dreamland," is being sung by the boys.*] Meet you tonight in Dreamland? Well, not if I see you first. But how in thunder can they expect to meet me in Dreamland when they won't give me a chance to get there. But believe little Gene if tonight's program resembles last night's I'm going to bribe Tony to turn on the hose.

[*The music stops and TED enters from the house. He sees GENE and crosses to C. Just as he speaks GENE takes a long draw on cigarette.*]

TED. [*Sentimentally.*] Gene!

GENE. [*Under breath.*] Great Scott! [*Quickly brings feet down from table and begins to moan as though ill.*]

TED. [*Reproachfully.*] Smoking a cigarette, Miss Gene?

GENE. [*Moaning.*] Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I saw you smoke one and I thought that if you liked them they must be nice. So I tried one, and, oh dear, it has made me so ill. Do cigarettes make you ill, Mr. Manners? I'm dying, oh, I am sure that I am dying, oh—oh—oh!

TED. You poor little duck!

GENE. [*Aside.*] I'm a duck now. Can you beat it? [*Aloud.*] Oh—oh—oh!

TED. Poor little girl! I remember my first cigarette.

GENE. Do you think that I will die, Mr. Manners?

TED. No, no. Death from cigarettes is never sudden—it is long drawn out.

[*TED sits beside GENE and puts his arm around him.*] Come lay your head on my shoulder; that will make you feel better.

GENE. I am sure that it would, but it wouldn't be proper, you know. Oh! Oh! I'm so sick. [*Drops head on TED's shoulder.*]

TED. Poor little cherub! [*Squeezes GENE.*]

GENE. [*Aside.*] A cherub! Me a cherub! [*Aloud.*] Oh—oh!

TED. I will carry you into the house. You must have attention.

GENE. Oh, but you can't carry me; I'm too heavy. Oh dear! Oh dear!

TED. I can't? Such a little slip of sweetness? I could carry you with one hand.

GENE. [*Aside.*] If he doesn't stop the slushy talk I'll break loose sure. [*Aloud.*] Indeed, Mr. Manners, I am heavier than you think. Besides, it wouldn't be proper. Oh dear, I am so sick. Go on, Mr. Manners, just leave me alone; I am going to die, but you mustn't see me.

TED. Poor little tootsem!

GENE. [*Aside.*] Tootsem! Gosh!

TED. Does it think that I couldn't carry it?

GENE. [*Aside.*] "It"—ye Gods, what next? [*Aloud.*] Oh! Oh! Go away and leave me, Mr. Manners, I am dying. Why, oh why, did I smoke that cigarette? [*GENE has plenty of funny aside business during entire scene.*]

TED. You poor baby! You must have some medicine. I will carry you, and the proprieties be hanged. [*Throws arms around GENE and tries to lift him, but finds it impossible.*] What the—say, you're heavier than I suspected.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Stung! [*Aloud.*] Yes, I am much heavier than I look; that is from playing foot—er, I mean basket-ball. Oh dear, perhaps you had better call the other boys to help you.

TED. [*His jealousy aroused.*] Let one of those boobs touch you. No, indeed. Mine alone shall be the sweet task.

GENE. [*Aside.*] It will be some task, I promise you.

[*TED tries again to lift GENE. GENE allows himself to be lifted to a standing posture, takes a few steps from bench and immediately proceeds to faint. TED staggers under the weight, though he protests.*]

TED. You are not so heavy; really you are not.

[*He is out of breath with the struggle, and when GENE faints he all but collapses with him. He is in a serious predicament, being too far from the bench to put GENE*

down, and after several efforts finds that it is impossible to move on with him. TONY and BENSON enter, to TED's immense relief.]

TED. Oh, Tony, assist me with Miss Gene. She is ill and has fainted.

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Fainted? I tink she need some more off dot drink, yet.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Right you are, Tony. You're all to the good!

BENSON. How can I assist you, sir? Command me.

TED. You take her feet, Benson; now, Tony, support her at the waist and I will support her head and shoulders. There, poor little girl.

[*Business of getting GENE in position.*]

GENE. [*Aside.*] If they drop me—good-night.

TONY. [*They are now ready to carry GENE to house.*] Vas iss it, huh? Vas made der lady sick?

TED. Those fool boys, I guess.

GENE. [*Aside.*] And that's no lie. [*They start toward house, BENSON leading. STEWART, FRANK and boys enter from house.*]

STEWART. Bless my soul, what has happened?

BENSON. The young—[*hesitates—GENE kicks him*]—er lady has fainted, sir.

BOYS. [*In consternation.*] Fainted!

FRANK. Oh, that's nothing; all girls do that.

GENE. [*Aside.*] If they feel as silly as I do I pity them.

[*Boys file down, BILL, DICK, GEORGE, JACK, FRED passing D. L. in front of BENSON, JEAN, TONY and TED, who carry GENE into house. Each boy speaks as he passes GENE.*]

BILL. Gene, poor kiddo!

DICK. Gene, little angel!

GEORGE. Gene, what a shame!

JACK. Gene!

FRED. Gene, I'm awfully sorry.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Gene, Gene, Gene; it's enough to make one rise from the dead. [*They go into house.*]

FRANK and STEWART stand C.; both are highly amused. Boys are D. L.; all shade heads and look troubled.]

BOYS. Poor Gene!

BILL. What knocked the poor kiddo out? She sure did look all to the bad. Wonder what made her sick?

DICK. That poetry you wrote, I suppose. That would make anybody sick.

BILL. Aw, cut it out; you'll make me forget that I'm a gentleman.

DICK. I didn't think you ever knew it.

[JACK sits on bench, sees cigarette stump, where GENE has dropped it. He picks it up.]

JACK. Ah, a clew to the mystery. [*Holds up stump.*]

GEORGE. You don't mean to insinuate that Gene would smoke a cigarette?

BOYS. [*Threatening.*] He had better not.

JACK. No, can't you see? That unmannerly Ted evidently took advantage of the poor little thing's youth and innocence and smoked one in her presence.

BILL. And the fumes knocked her out. No wonder he was so afraid to tell what had happened. He's tried all day to get the inside track and cut the rest of us out. Well, that will finish him all right. No girl would ever forgive a fellow for a trick like that.

DICK. Ted seems to stand in, though; he's in her charming presence oftener than the rest of us.

BILL. That is because his unadulterated nerve will not allow him to understand when he is not wanted.

BOYS. He has some nerve.

DICK. Now look here, boys; something must be done. Ted's a friend of ours, to be sure, and a first-rate fellow, to a certain extent, but we know that he is not good enough for Miss Gene. We must devise some means of saving her from making a mistake.

STEWART. [*Aside to FRANK.*] Such unselfish devotion! They're fine bachelors, Frank.

BILL. That's right. One of us ought to speak to Miss Gene and in a—well, in a slick way, put her wise to the fact that Ted is all to the good as a pal, but nix for a

husband. Of course, she must not get on to the fact that she is being warned—it must be done in a diplomatic way so she feels the effect but doesn't know the reason.

GEORGE. You might mesmerize her.

FRANK. [*Coming forward.*] See here! As President of the Bachelor Club, I feel that I must read you gentlemen a fiery lecture. Ten days ago you made a solemn vow—

BILL. Aw, shut up, Frank; cut the preacher act.

FRANK. But I feel it my duty to warn you, inasmuch as it is I who have put temptation in your way. I promised you that you need not make love to my cousin; you were simply to help to entertain her, and here in less than twenty-four hours you are all desperately in love. Last week you declared that you hated girls.

DICK. Ah, yes; but, Frank, those were the ravings of unawakened souls. Then we did not know Gene!

BOYS. [*All sigh.*] Gene!

STEWART. [*Aside.*] This is nothing to the real awakening.

FRANK. A week ago you vowed that you would never marry.

BILL. Yes, but then our lamps had not beheld Gene!

BOYS. [*Sigh.*] Gene!

STEWART. [*Aside.*] When a normal man falls in love it is a tragedy; but when a conceited young coxcomb is wounded by the fiery shaft, it's a darn good joke.

FRANK. A week ago you declared that a woman would hamper your career.

FRED. One would need no career with Gene.

BOYS. [*Sigh.*] Gene!

STEWART. [*Aside.*] What a mighty fall is here.

FRANK. A week ago you vowed to know many, love few and marry none.

GEORGE. I would change that *none* to *one* if that one might be Gene!

BOYS. [*Sigh.*] Gene!

STEWART. [*Aside.*] They are surely in the toils of the "*snare sex.*"

FRANK. And, lastly, you swore to forfeit one thousand dollars if you broke that vow.

JACK. Gene would be cheap at half the price.

BOYS. [*Sigh.*] Ge— [*Realize what JACK has said.*] Huh?

JACK. Er—er I mean—at treble the price.

BOYS. [*Sigh.*] Gene!

FRANK. I see there's no scaring you boys. Well, good luck to the winner. I'm sorry you can't all have her but I'll be glad to welcome any one of you as cousin.

BOYS. Thanks!

BILL. Come on, fellows, I suppose there is no chance to get another glimpse of the divine Gene tonight. Let's take a little row on the brimpy deeps of the lake.

FRED. I'm with you! Anything to cool this fever in me heart.

FRANK. That's right, boys, go ahead and have a good time.

[*Boys exit L. laughing. FRANK and STEWART laugh heartily.*]

FRANK. Oh, dad, did you ever see such a lot of love sick fools in your life? Gene won't have to masquerade much longer. They are all ready to get down on their knees and pop the question at the slightest provocation. But I must prolong the agony.

STEWART. And what is your opinion now of Bachelor Clubs?

FRANK. Dad, don't say a word; I'm reformed. These love sick swains hold the mirror up to me. I know that I would fall as easily as they have if placed in the same position. This day has taught me that the ladies are not only inevitable but also indispensable. I mean to resign from the Bachelor Club and hunt a wife.

STEWART. That's the first sensible thing you've said since you entered college.

TONY. [*Enters with stein.*] Vas iss it, huh? 'Scuse, Meester Stewart, but dot young lady vat you gall Mees Gene, she haf shust ordered von more drink like you

make her. Dot is six in ten minutes. I tought maybe likely you should vant she not haf so many.

FRANK. Six? Great Scott! I'll have to go hold his head under the hydrant. [*Exits hurriedly into house.*]

TONY. Vell, I guess as long as dis von iss made yet, it would be a sin to vaste it. I nefer indulge bud I hate to trow it oud. I vill shust trink it. [*Drinks.*] Mine golly dot vas goot. She said pring her anuder und anuder und anuder. I tink I had better make dose udders und it would be a shame to vaste them. [*Exits into house. Enter BENSON.*]

BENSON. [*To STEWART.*] If you please, sir, the young gentleman, sir——

STEWART. Which young gentleman?

BENSON. The one dressed like a lady, sir.

STEWART. Benson, I'm ashamed of you. Didn't I tell you you saw no young gentleman? You saw only my niece, a young lady.

BENSON. Yes, sir, if you please, sir, but it wouldn't sound well to deliver the message as sent by a young lady, sir, and knowing you knew, sir, and knowing you knew that I knew, I made bold to speak as I did, sir.

STEWART. Well, don't make so bold again. What was the message?

BENSON. I was to tell you, sir, to tell those bally, blank, blank fools that if they sang love songs under her window tonight she'd take a blank, blank revolver and blow their blank, blank heads off, if you please, sir.

STEWART. I thank you, Benson, for the blanks. Trust me, I shall deliver the message but with a more lady-like interpretation.

BENSON. Thank you, sir. [*Exits into house.*]

TED. [*Enters from house, looking back to waff kisses toward GENE's window; he does not see STEWART, who has gone D. L.*] My Love! My sweet! What passion doth consume me. I who ever mocked you. Love, oh, how bitterly am I punished? Romeo, in all your woe you ne'er suffered the pangs of love as I do now. I

will walk in the forest; mayhap nature has some cunning to allay the fever, and when next I meet my love I will unburden my soul and learn from her fair lips, my fate. [*Exits L. with tragic stride.*]

STEWART. [*Laughs heartily.*] This one raves as though he had lately been to the theatre to see Shakespeare done to a finish. Well, Puck, I say with thee, "What fools these mortals be!"

[*Enter FRANK and GENE from house.*]

GENE. [*Goes D. L. to bench.*] Now, look here, if I can't have a drink now and then to brace me up to meet this bunch of lunatics, I'm going to quit. [*Pulls off slippers.*] Drat those slippers!

FRANK. I don't object to one drink occasionally but when you go to it like a herd to a mill stream, it's time to stop!

TONY. [*Enters with letter; he is slightly intoxicated.*] Vas iss it, huh? Here iss a letter vich der maid said vas forgot ven der mail—hie!—vas brought vrom der village—

FRANK. [*Takes letter.*] Tony what is the matter with you?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Mazzer wis me? Nozzing mazzer wis me— Young lady ordered six more drinks—nozzing mazzer wiz me—

GENE. And I suppose that you are trying to give the impression that "SHE" drank them.

FRANK. He's giving a pretty good impression of what would have happened if she had. Get along, you rascal! All orders are cancelled. The young lady doesn't want another drink tonight. [*Tony goes off R.*] This letter's for you, Gene. Lucky the boys didn't see it, "Mr. Gene Stewart." [*Gives letter to Gene, then crosses to Mr. Stewart who is sitting D. R. They sit and talk.*]

GENE. [*Reads letter.*] Great Scott! It's all off, Frank, I've got to quit!

FRANK & S. [*Jump up.*] What! You've got to what?

GENE. Quit!

FRANK & S. [*Dropping into scat.*] Oh!

FRANK. [*Jumps up and crosses to GENE.*] But, Gene, you can't! Everything is going just great. The boys have fallen into the trap, swallowed bait and hook, they're caught and ready to be done to a finish. You can't desert me now, Gene.

STEWART. Don't quit now, lad, the fun is at its height and I am anxious I own to see it through.

FRANK. Quit, when you have six amorous swains sighing for you?

GENE. Six dumb fools!

STEWART. Six budding poets writing sonnets to your budding nose?

GENE. Oh, shucks!

FRANK. Six dashing young gallants chanting love songs beneath your window?

GENE. Yes, and keeping me awake all night. Just listen to this. [*Unfolds letter.*] Um—um—the first part wouldn't interest you.

FRANK. By these presents I know who 'tis from. Proceed with the verdict.

GENE. [*Reads.*] "You say that you are going to visit your cousin, Frank Stewart. His sister, Gertrude, was my dearest friend at school, and has often pressed me to visit her. I haven't heard from her for some time, but I always told her that when I did come that it would be as a surprise, so don't breathe a word of what I am about to tell you. I am coming on Wednesday and will stay until Friday." Will you—um-um. The rest is not important. Now do you see the fix I am in? If Gladys comes here and discovers me in these togs, making love to six young idiots, even though they are of my sex, she will be furious and it will be all up with me.

FRANK. But just think, man, what a lesson you are teaching these fellows—you have converted them from sworn bachelors to swearing suitors.

GENE. Yes, and don't forget that at the same time I am raising six rivals for myself.

FRANK. Say, don't get the idea that because your Gladys has made you lose the little sense you ever had, that every other fellow must see with your eyes. There are dozens of girls who could make your "Swan a crow."

GENE. Well, if there are, I haven't met them and I have met nearly every girl worth meeting.

STEWART. Instead of quarrelling, you boys had better look to—the business in hand. If Gene feels that he has to quit, bring matters to a climax tonight. The boys are all ready to propose. Indeed I heard Ted avow his intention, a la Romeo, to propose at the next meeting.

FRANK. That will save us! Play your part well, tonight, Gene, and I have no idea but that you will be free to welcome Gladys tomorrow. And, believe me, we will give her a royal welcome. There will be seven reformed bachelors in her train.

GENE. Yes? And where do I come in?

FRANK. Oh, you will shine resplendent among us all because your art brought us to our senses, and Gladys can get busy and find suitable wives for the bunch.

GENE. And are you cured too?

FRANK. Absolutely! I am going on a still hunt for a wife immediately.

GENE. [*Jumps up.*] Good for you! If my torture of the past night and day accomplishes no more, I am satisfied.

TONY. [*Enters with stein.*] HIC! Vas iss it, huh? Sought maybe young lady might want nuzzer—er—a soda wasser, hic! If Misser Frank so-no-yet, hic, it would be a shame to wase it—hic!

GENE. The young lady does! Hand it over, Tony, I wish to drink to the good luck of my cousin who has regained his senses. [*Takes stein from TONY, who watches him drink with comical expression of disappointment.*] That will be enough for tonight, Tony. Please stop taking my name in vain. I have ordered no more drinks of any description.

TONY. [*Takes stein ruefully and looks in.*] Was iss it, huh? All gone and you don't vant no more?

FRANK. No, you rascal! Don't make another till I order it. Get out, you're drunk!

TONY. Was is it, huh? Misser Frank, you insuld me. I nefer vas drunk in my life yed. I am a tee-dottler. I nefer ged drunk. [*Starts to house.*]

FRANK. Then I beg your pardon, Tony. I have seen so few drunken men in my life I may be mistaken.

TONY. You—hic—you vas mistaken Misser Frank—I nefer get drunk—no—I nefer get drunk. [*Exit into house.*]

STEWART. Come, Frank, we will leave. It is almost time for the boys to return. Gene must be alone and romantically situated to lure them to their finish.

FRANK. Wait a minute. [*Runs to house but returns immediately with pillows.*] Gene, you must be the interesting convalescent. Come here and sit on the bench—I will prop the pillows behind you. Got any powder? [*GENE opens a small vanity case attached to a chain around his neck.*] Now we will get a sympathy racket pallor. [*Powders GENE's face, Mr. STEWART comes with foot stool and scarf.*] Now your dainty feet on the stool. Where are your slippers? For Heaven's sake keep them on! [*Rushes for slippers and puts them on GENE.*]

GENE. Gosh! They hurt!

FRANK. Can't help it. Got to stand it an hour longer at least. [*STEWART drapes scarf around GENE's head.*] Artistic to the limit! If they don't propose one and all I'll drink sixteen soda waters and order them by their right name. Come on, Dad, we leave our modern Cleopatra to snare not one, but six Antonies.

GENE. Farewell. When next we meet I'll be engaged or dead.

[*Exit STEWART and FRANK into house.*]

GENE. Ghee! Do I have to hold this pose till one of those guys appears? It seems to me that girls must be mighty uncomfortable, posing all the time. Wonder

if I would have time to smoke a cigarette before one of them makes hideous the night with his vision and love howls? [BILL and DICK laugh off L.] No chance, they approach. [Lies back among pillows.] I think this pose is positively alluring.

[Enter BILL and DICK.]

BILL. [Looks up at window and speaks softly.]
Gene!

DICK. [Looks up at window and speaks softly.]
GENE! GENE!

GENE. [Aside.] The fire is lit, now let it consume me. [Aloud and very sweetly.] Ahem!

BILL & DICK. [Hurry to her.] Miss Gene!

BILL. Glad to see you out, Miss Gene. Hope you're feeling up to the mark.

GENE. Up to the mark? Ah, Mr. Bill, I am afraid that I do not always understand you, you speak so quaintly.

DICK. Allow me to explain, Miss Gene.

BILL. Just keep your oar out, Dick.

GENE. [Innocently.] Keep your oar out? Oh, you are referring to your row upon the lake.

DICK. No, Miss Gene, Bill in his bungling, slangy way [BILL looks daggers at DICK.] means to ask how you feel and to tell me to mind my own business.

GENE. [Sweetly.] Oh, surely Mr. Bill wouldn't be so unkind as to say that to you?

BILL. [Aside.] Wouldn't he? Well, that's not a circumstance to what Mr. Bill would like to do to him.

DICK. How are you feeling now, Miss Gene? Have you quite recovered from the noxious fumes of that atrocious cigarette?

GENE. Atrocious cigarette? Surely Mr. Ted has not told——

BILL. Told? No the rascally dope slinger wouldn't peach on himself. But we found the end of it and believe me we're not babes in the wood; we were on to the fact in a minute what the rummy guy had been doing.

GENE. [*Pretending to be puzzled.*] Dope slinger—rummy guy? Pardon me, Mr. Dick, I am afraid that I cannot always understand Mr. Bill. Will you kindly explain? [*DICK starts toward GENE, BILL pulls him back and they argue silently while GENE speaks aside.*] Can't one of them take the hint to vamoose? I can't hope to get a proposal from two at once.

BILL. [*To DICK.*] All right, have it your way. I give you five minutes to propose and be rejected but that's the limit. I'm on to the fact that the fair Gene is not for you, but there's nothing like letting a fool hang himself. [*To GENE.*] Ta, ta, Miss Gene. I will allow this Beau Brummel to discourse some nonsense to you. I will come back in a jiffy.

GENE. Good-bye. Do not be long.

BILL. [*Aside to DICK.*] Now, do you hear that? Wonder who has the inside track? [*Saunters off R. with hands in pockets and head held high.*]

DICK. The conceited young coxcomb!

GENE. [*Overhears and laughs.*] Aren't all men conceited, Mr. Dick?

DICK. Indeed not all, Miss Gene. I flatter myself that I have very little of that obnoxious fault.

GENE. [*Aside.*] If you have little, Heaven save me from the man who has much. [*Aloud.*] Do you know, Mr. Dick, that I love to converse with you, you use such beautiful language?

DICK. [*Swelling up.*] Ah, is that so, Miss Gene? [*Aside.*] I wish Billie could hear that. Now is a good chance to kill Mr. Ted and put in a good word for yours truly. [*Brings chair close to GENE's bench and sits.*] Tell me, do you really feel better?

GENE. [*Sentimentally.*] Yes, much better and very happy. [*Places hand near DICK in a tempting position. DICK looks at hand, makes movement to take it, looks around nervously, makes another movement, looks embarrassed and finally puts his hands in his pockets. Gene is disgusted.*]

DICK. I am enraptured to know that you have so successfully overcome the treachery of a villain.

GENE. A villain, Mr. Dick? I am afraid that I fail to understand your meaning.

DICK. Of course, innocence can never comprehend villainy.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Innocence! Oh, gosh!

DICK. Only a hardened criminal can recognize crime when he sees it. It is always the guileless fool who is his victim.

GENE. Am I the guileless fool, Mr. Dick?

DICK. No—oh, no—er—I beg your pardon, I wouldn't for the world—er—have you suppose—er—that I would be guilty of calling so peerless a creature such a name. You must know that I adore you—and only wish to—er—save you from the villain who—is—a fine—pal—but—nix—I mean—not a fine husband, and—er—I wish to—er—I wish to—er—propose—

GENE. Yes, yes, you wish to propose; go on Mr. Dick.

DICK. I wish to—er—to er—propose—to—er—propose that we take a row on the lake.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Great snakes! a row on the lake; what a blow. [*Aloud.*] I am more than grateful to you, Mr. Dick, but I am afraid that I am unequal to the exertion. I would much rather stay here in this beautiful moonlight and talk to you.

DICK. How—er—very sweet of you Miss Gene. I am highly flattered and—er—er—I love—[*Mops brow.*] I love—er—I love—er—soda water—er—no, I didn't mean that. I—er—excuse me, I must go. [*Exits R.*]

GENE. [*Laughs heartily.*] I wonder if I looked as foolish the first time I tried to propose to Gladys. It's no wonder she side-tracked me, if I did. Well, there's chance number one gone. Come on, ye fools, I've got to land one of you. [*Enter JACK, GEORGE and FRED L.*] How in kingdom come can I land a proposal from one of them when they insist upon coming in bunches.

JACK. [*Sees GENE, others do not.*] Oh, I say, boys,

you go on in. I'm going to sit out here for awhile and smoke a cigarette.

GEORGE. All right, I'm going in and see if I can do anything for dear Miss Gene.

FRED. I'm with you. I'd like to thrash that idiot Ted for making her sick.

GEORGE. Ted would make anybody sick.

FRED. I should say he would! [FRED and GEORGE exit into house.]

GENE. [*Laughs.*] Well done, Mr. Jack! I was hoping that they would leave so that you could talk to me.

JACK. [*In pretended surprise.*] Oh, I beg pardon, Miss Gene, I didn't see you.

GENE. Oh, you naughty man, are you going to snub me for flattering myself that you sent them away that you could talk to me—alone?

JACK. Would that flatter you?

GENE. Wouldn't any girl be flattered to know that a handsome young man was interested enough in her to wish to talk to her—alone?

JACK. Then I must confess that I did see you, and contrived to get rid of the other fellows.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Oh, ye Gods, how subtle he is! I am sure of him—if he doesn't get stage fright.

[JACK fidgets around, looks embarrassed, walks around to see if anybody is listening. GENE watches him, laughing. Finally he comes down and sits on chair near GENE.]

JACK. Ha-humph a-er—I wish to speak to you, Miss Gene, er—er—upon a subject a-er—very near my heart.

GENE. I'm not very well versed in heart subjects, Mr. Jack.

JACK. Then—er—er—let me teach you, Miss Gene.

GENE. I am very willing to be taught.

JACK. That is er—er—very kind of you, and er—er—I might say—

GENE. [*Aside.*] You might say a whole lot if you had sense enough. [*Aloud.*] As you were saying, Mr. Jack—

JACK. Ah—er—er—was I saying anything?

GENE. No—but you were talking.

JACK. Oh, yes, I was talking—er—about love.

GENE. Oh, were you? I hadn't heard.

JACK. Yes—because—er—you see, it was my heart that was speaking.

GENE. You must have a wonderful heart, Mr. Jack. I do not believe I ever heard of a heart conversing, before.

JACK. [*Getting bolder.*] That is because you have never loved before.

GENE. And do you think that I love, now?

JACK. Why, certainly. You show all of the symptoms of passionate love.

GENE. Tell me some of my symptoms. I am afraid that I do not recognize them.

JACK. Your eyes grew bright as I approached.

GENE. I must chide my eyes for being so forward.

JACK. Your heart throbbed when I came near.

GENE. If it didn't throb how could I live?

JACK. You could not live without me.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Suffering Moses I've misjudged that man, his conceit will treble Dick's!

JACK. You were happy because I sent the others away and stayed with you alone.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Ghee, I've got him cinched all right. [*Aloud.*] Yes, yes, go on.

JACK. How do you prefer a proposal, Miss Gene, standing or kneeling?

GENE. [*Considering.*] Well—I've never had one kneeling, I think that would suit me best. [*Aside.*] But for Heaven's sake hurry!

JACK. [*Kneels facing front, TED enters, sits on bench left of GENE, they pay no attention to JACK, TED puts his arm around GENE, he drops his head on TED's shoulder, TED takes GENE'S hand and they sit in this position during JACK'S speech.*] Dearest, sweetest, brightest, best! I know that you love me, for love has spoken in your eyes since the first moment that we met.

I have longed to kiss you and call you mine, because you showed so plainly that you wished me to do so. [TED makes a movement as though to strike JACK, GENE restrains him highly amused.] I love you, dear, almost as much as you love me, not quite as much I must own for it is not man's nature to love as deeply as it is woman's. [TED shakes his fist at him.] Now tell me sweetheart when will you marry me; for marry me I know you will, I have read your answer in your eyes. Come, darling, seal the compact with a loving kiss. [TED kisses GENE as JACK turns, JACK speaks without rising.] Wha—hat do you mean by kissing my affianced wife?

TED. Not your affianced wife, Jack, but mine! Thank you for doing the hard work. The next time that you propose to a young lady, however, I advise you to do it facing her, for you never know what is going on behind your back. Trot along Jackie, I want to talk to my sweetheart.

JACK. [*Rises slowly.*] You—you—oh I can't begin to tell you what I think of you! [*Rushes off R.*]

TED. Now sweetheart, tell me again that you love me.

GENE. I love you!

TED. I am the happiest man on earth!

GENE. So am I!

TED. What?

GENE. Oh—I mean that I am the happiest girl.

TED. I have waited all day for this moment!

GENE. [*With double meaning.*] So have I!

TED. [*Rapturously.*] Gene!

GENE. [*With pretended rapture.*] Ted! [TED throws his arms around GENE and hugs him passionately, GENE kicks out at side in comic manner.]

TED. When will you marry me, Gene?

GENE. Whenever you wish it, Ted.

TED. Tomorrow!

GENE. Tomorrow, if you still wish it. But I think that you had better tell the other boys. They are all trying to propose to me.

TED. I'll break their heads!

GENE. You can't blame them for falling in love with me, too.

TED. Yes, I do, they are all sworn bachelors and they have no right to fall in love with you, and now that you are mine they had better keep off!

GENE. Well tell them, *dear!*

TED. I will and emphatically.

[*Enter; Boys, FRANK and STEWART from house.*]

JACK. There's the reprobate! [TED and GENE rise and come forward.] The cheat! The trickster! He's a fine member of the Bachelor Club! I caught him kissing Miss Gene and he declared that they were engaged.

TED. Did you tell them what you were doing while I was getting engaged?

JACK. That isn't necessary.

FRANK. As President of the Bachelor Club, Ted, I am afraid that I must reprimand you severely for your defection and remind you that the Club is entitled to \$1,000.

TED. And you needn't worry, the Club will get its one thousand dollars, and I never have signed a check with a lighter heart. [*Takes out check book and writes check.*]

GENE. [*With pretended tears.*] Are you angry with me, Cousin Frank, for falling in love with Ted? You shouldn't have introduced me to him then for you know how attractive he is.

FRANK. [*Petting GENE, both laugh aside.*] There, there Gene dear, we didn't mean a word. It was all a joke. Come on boys, I give you permission to kiss my cousin and wish her joy. Come on, boys, don't sulk. We know lots of stunning girls whom we will introduce to you. Come on!

BILL. [*Kisses GENE.*] Gene!

DICK. [*Kisses GENE.*] Gene!

GEORGE. [*Kisses GENE.*] Gene!

JACK. [*Kisses GENE.*] Gene! Oh Gene how you deceived me!

GENE. Not I, Jack, my eyes!

TED. [*Hands check to FRANK.*] Here is the best check I ever signed, Frank!

DICK. Boys, what do you say to presenting the check to GENE with our compliments, as a wedding present?

BOYS. Agreed!

BILL. She deserves it for having the courage to marry Ted.

TED. Thanks! You're a dandy crowd of muffs, I haven't heard one of you wish me joy.

GEORGE. We're a crowd of jealous fools. Of course we wish you joy. Come on, boys.

BOYS. Right oh! Lots of joy, Ted! [*Boys crowd around TED and shake his hand.*]

GENE. [*Aside to FRANK.*] Now I've done it, how am I going to strike the climax?

FRANK. Don't worry it will strike of itself in a few moments.

TED. [*Patronizingly.*] Thank you, boys. I am glad that you bear me no ill-will for beating you out.

BILL. Not on your life Ted, we're glad you were so lucky and we'll all be your best men so we can kiss the bride.

TED. All right, boys, but that will be your last chance to kiss Gene.

GENE. Yes, boys, but I promise you each two kisses on my wedding day.

BOYS. You bet we'll get them.

BENSON. [*Enters with telegram.*] If you please, here is a telegram for Mr. Gene Stewart.

GENE. [*Aside.*] Thank goodness!

BOYS. Mr. Gene Stewart?

TED. You're on the wrong track, Benson, there is only a Miss Gene here and that is my Gene.

BENSON. Beg pardon, sir, but this is for Mr. Gene Stewart and is marked, "Important." [*To GENE.*] Is it for you, sir?

GENE. [*In natural voice.*] Right you are, Benson, that is my name and title when in the world. [*Boys look at each other in amazement, GENE opens and reads tele-*

gram.] Great Scott! Gladys will be here, tonight! [GENE pulls off wig, FRANK and STEWART highly amused watch the other boys to see the effect. BOYS look amazed, TED drops in chair L. and gasps for breath. GENE runs off and changes to his own clothes. BENSON exits.]

BOYS. Wha—wha—what's the matter?

FRANK. Boys, I ask your pardon for a practical joke.

BOYS. Joke?

FRANK. Yes. Just be patient a moment and I will enlighten you for I see you are greatly in need of an explanation. My cousin Gene, instead of being a charming young lady is a healthy, clear-headed young man. When his telegram arrived at the Club I saw your mistake and thought that it would be a good opportunity to play a joke on you and at the same time find out the real worth of such an organization as "The Bachelor Club." Really I expected your fall, but I was not prepared for so sudden or complete a surrender. I have read of love at first sight but I did not expect to see six strapping fellows fall in love at first sight with such a demure slip of a girl.

BILL. Slip of a boy, you mean. Well, boys, we've been all kinds of fools, but I do feel sorry for Ted, he's knocked out for fair. But I say Frank I know that I have heard you speak of a fair cousin and I am sure you always called "It" her.

FRANK. Yes, I have another cousin who really is a fair young girl and to make matters right with Ted, I have telegraphed for her to come and console him.

TED. [*Who is still sitting dejectedly.*] No, thanks, I don't care to meet any more of your relatives. I am hard hit, boys, but never again will I let a girl beguile me, I am a better member of the Bachelor Club for this experience.

DICK. Bachelor Club? There is no Bachelor Club. We have all resigned and we are going to hunt out the prettiest girls in New York and take their breath away by a whirlwind courtship.

BOYS. Right you are!

STEWART. I am glad to hear it, boys. The man who cannot find a good woman to marry him is unfortunate, but the man who *will* not find one is all kinds of a fool. God put men and women in the world to love and help each other and one life is never complete without the love, help and partnership of the other. [GENE enters.]

FRANK. Boys, allow me to introduce to you my cousin, Mr. Eugene Stewart, otherwise Gene.

BOYS. [*Shaking hands with GENE.*] Glad to meet you.

BILL. Say you're some actor! If you went on the boards, you'd make the others look like a forged bank-note.

GENE. Thanks! Hope you're not sore at me, boys?

DICK. Sore? No indeed, you have made us see what fools we were to think that we could exist without falling in love.

JACK. I was sure from the first that something was wrong.

BOYS. Shut up, Jackie, you were nothing of the kind!

GEORGE. Say Ted's taking it mighty hard though.

GENE. Never mind he'll get over it.

STEWART. Say Gene you'd better give him back his check.

GENE. Give him back his check? I should say not! It was given to me for a wedding present and as such I accepted it and as such I shall keep it for I expect to be married next month.

TED. Yes, indeed, keep it. I would not want it back, the lesson I have learned is well worth the money.

FRANK. Don't be peevish, Ted, learn to take a joke.

BILL. "He jests at scars who never felt a wound." Hurry up—the girl cousin, Frank, that will be the only cure.

GENE. And don't forget, boys, I promised you each a kiss on my wedding day.

BOYS. We'll be there.

BILL. And we'll collect—from your wife.

GENE. Oh I say—

[Enter TONY dragging hose, BENSON follows with tray filled with glasses.]

STEWART. Tony! What on earth are you doing?

TONY. Vas iss it, huh? Der young laty gif me five tollars to durn her hose on der blankety-blankety fools—if dey dared to sing under her vinder tonight, yet, so I thought I would get it ready—yes.

BOYS. [*Laugh heartily.*] Oh Gene, how could you?

GENE. Boys, let me tell you something and believe me I am now speaking from experience. A week ago I wouldn't have thought of such advice. When you go to woo your true love, do not sing love songs under her window at night; she will not appreciate them if she is sleepy, and every good healthy girl gets sleepy; do not write original love poems to her; you may not be a poet and it would be disastrous to let her find it out; do not tell her she loves you, let her do that; when you are ready to propose, do it before the other fellow gets a chance; when you propose to her face her, for you never know what is going on behind your back.

DICK. [*All lift glasses.*] Your advice we will follow. Here's to the girls! We believed that they were impossible but have discovered that they are not only possible but also delightfully delightful. There's no use in trying to live without them. [*All drink but TED.*]

FRANK. And here's to the downfall of all Bachelor Clubs, they teach a man folly and then the girls make him look foolish.

BOYS. Down with the Bachelor Club!

[*All drink but TED, who sits dejectedly L.*]

BENSON. TONY. GENE.

FRANK.

STEWART.

BILL.

TED.

FRED.

DICK.

JACK.

GEORGE.

CURTAIN.

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